

Wednesday, January 18, 2006

Duxbury Clipper



Duxbury firefighter/EMT Rob Reardon set up the live website and continues to update the department's original website with photos and information.

Duxbury Fire Comes Alive

The next time you hear sirens blaring and see fire trucks whizzing by your house, you will be able to listen the call firefighters are responding to sans an expensive scanner.

Firefighter/EMT Rob Reardon built a website which allows residents to listen in on fire calls, after he noticed that departments in many of Massachusetts more urban areas were offering the service. Anyone with Internet access can log onto the department's main website at www.duxburyfire.com and click on the live link or you can log directly onto the site at www.duxburyfirelive.com.

"It's like having a scanner without spending \$200 on one," Reardon said. "You can listen 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It also allows the chief to hear what we are doing when he is away. Our two-way radios don't carry that far."

Reardon said Duxbury is the only department in Plymouth County providing the live service on a dedicated basis. The site went up in November and was created using old and donated equipment, costing the department nothing. Windows Media Player is needed to listen to the calls, but this program can be downloaded for free. There is usually about a six to 10 second delay depending on connection speed.

"We have a responsibility to keep up with the times and the

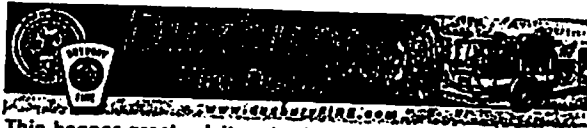
technology," Reardon said.

For the past three years, Duxbury has offered residents a risk-free peek into its emergency calls. Reardon and fellow firefighters Matt Gaskins, John Sjostedt and Buzz Wadsworth take photographs during calls and post the pictures on the department's main website.

In addition to photographs, residents can find educational and informational data on the website. The site offers links to kids' pages, which include games and safety lessons with common child favorites like Sesame Street's Elmo. Burning permits can be downloaded and citizens can set up an appointment to have their car seats inspected.

Reardon was pleased to learn that his hard work is paying off. The fire department's website received the most visits than any other town site in November. Over 1500 hits were logged. The information can even be broken down to which page of the website was visited the most. Reardon takes this information and uses it to cater the site to the residents' interests.

"We learn what's interesting and what's not," he said. "We get a lot of feedback. I've gotten e-mails from all around the world. I got one from Ireland last week. Our site is fun, educational and informational."



This banner greets visitors to the Duxbury Fire Department's live website.